



## Guardian Rock



### TRAIL HEAD DIRECTIONS

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center, drive south on Kennedy Memorial Drive. The road forks, take the left fork named Paige Bar Road. Continue south past the Whiskeytown Cemetery.

Again the road forks, the dirt road leads to Shasta and Igo, the paved road leads to the NEED Camp. At the fork is the parking area. After parking, walk down the paved road towards the NEED Camp and bridge. Just before the bridge is the trail head on the left.

### TRAIL DESCRIPTION

This trail leads into Lower Clear Creek Canyon, a wild and scenic portion of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area that remains today as it did hundreds of years ago. The trail parallels the rim of the creek for most of the way.

### FEATURES

- 1 mile one way to Horse Camp
- Sunny exposure, few shady areas
- Elevation 900 to 1100 feet
- Moderate but rocky, not a child or senior friendly trail
- Rewarding views of Kanaka Peak and Clear Creek

Rising from river bottom, the trail follows an old mining road that is supported by an extensive rock wall. It continues on the old mining road until it narrows to a single track. It passes through areas that the Wintu Indians lived in for thousands of years.

The trail then splits, the uphill side signed "Horse Camp" is for horses and bicyclists. The downhill side signed "Guardian Rock" leads to the river and is not recommended for horses. Bicyclists may have to carry their bikes at times.

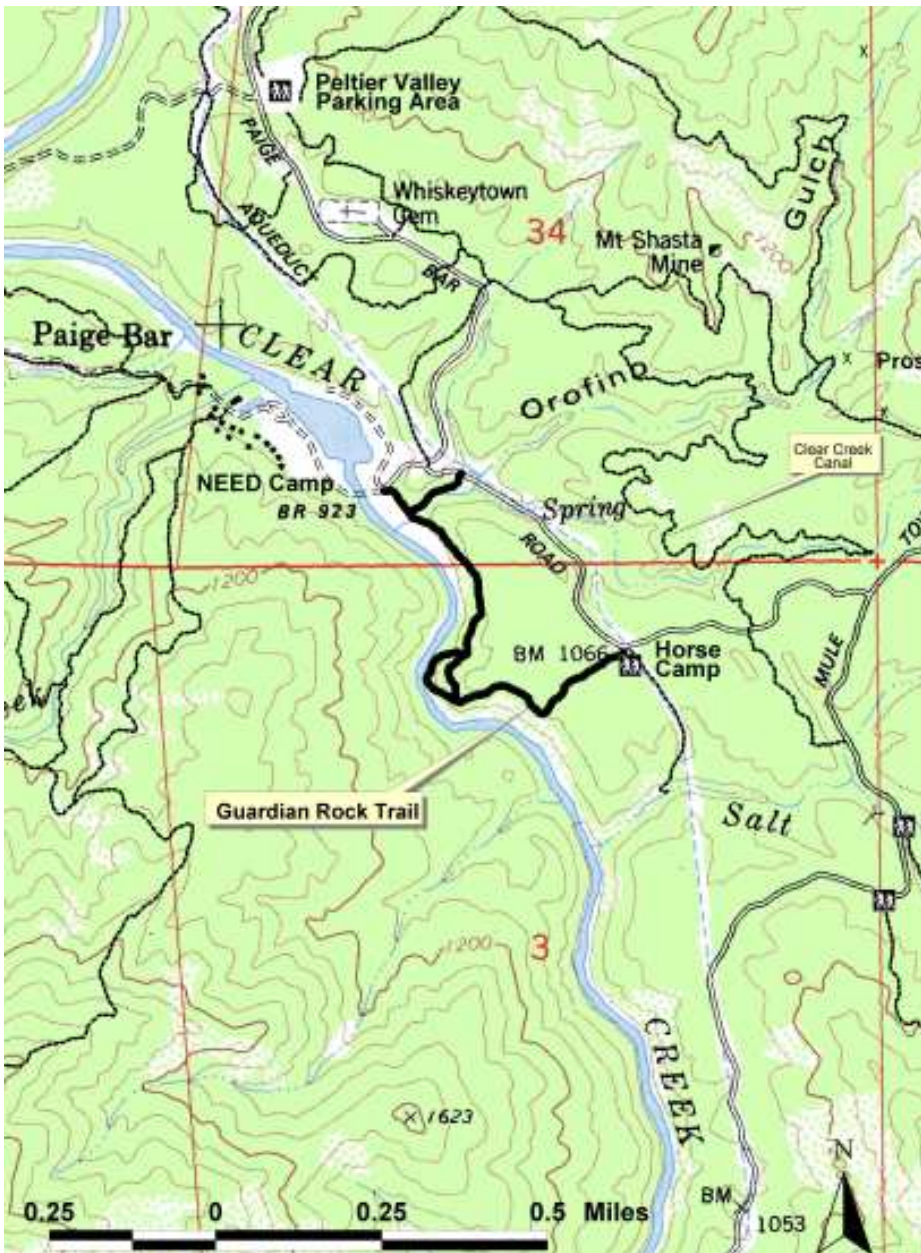


In 1912, Saeltzer Dam was built across Clear Creek 10 miles down stream and blocked salmon migration and spawning. Clear Creek is the northernmost major tributary to the Sacramento River and the last major creek before Shasta Dam in which Chinook and Steelhead Salmon can spawn. Prior to dam removal in 2000, salmon had almost disappeared from the creek. They are now returning in increasing numbers each year. At the bottom of the creek, Guardian Rock, a large outcropping on the left bank, marks where water flows increase in velocity and gradient.

From Guardian Rock, the trail climbs up to a vantage point where one can see both up and down the Clear Creek Canyon. Across the canyon the forested mountains of Kanaka Peak and South Fork Mountain can be seen. The west side of the creek receives more shade from Kanaka and has moisture loving trees such as fir mixed in with the pine and oak forest. The east and drier side of the creek has a hardier forest comprised of oak, grey pine and manzanita.

The trail climbs out of the canyon and intersects with the cut off. In this area, mining remnants may be seen. Look for small terraces along the trail, once occupied by mining equipment and buildings. An old collapsed mining shaft may be seen on a level area shortly after the trail intersection. Look to the left.





After climbing out of the canyon the trail turns north towards Horse Camp which is just 0.25 miles distant.

To return from Horse Camp, turn left onto Mule Town Road and walk down hill to the parking area. Or, turn around and go back down the trail.



Cascade Oregon Grape (*Berberis nervosa*) is found on the cut-off, near the junction. The berries are eaten by wildlife and make good jelly. Indians made a yellow dye from the bark and wood of a taller variety, *Berberis aquifolium* also called Tall Oregon grape.



**Kitchen Cupboard** Decomposing tree stumps provide a ready food source for birds and other animals such as bears. These creatures rip the tree apart searching for bugs and grubs. Look carefully at the stump and spot the holes made by birds pecking for food.

